

BURLINGTON, VERMONT
FREE PRESS

M - 47,886
S - C. N-A

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APR 25 1976

U.S. Intelligence Safeguards Liberty

FORMER CIA Director William E. Colby left some interesting news in his wake when he visited Burlington last week, but there was preoccupation with the past and not enough discussion of the part intelligence operations play in preserving our liberties.

The CIA, which is only one segment of the intelligence community, has been criticized primarily for two activities: Covert action to influence the course of other countries and domestic activities which actually fall within the jurisdiction of the FBI.

We are assured by the new CIA chief, George Bush, as well as by Colby, that the CIA has taken the pledge against illegal conduct.

When Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, who resigned last week as deputy director of CIA, came to Burlington he made one statement

which sticks: Without means to safeguard human values and liberty by peaceful means and limited action abroad, the U.S. would have only two alternatives -- acquiescence or war.

The chief function of intelligence is to gather information on military forces, weapons, foreign policy, economic conditions, finances, politics and leadership. This information is essential in deciding our own posture.

Cloak and dagger operations are not the chief source of such information. Our intelligence people gather most of it from newspapers, books, magazines, journals, speeches, TV, radio and other "public" sources.

Technology has greatly enhanced information gathering. It is surveillance by satellites that has made it possible for us

to consider arms limitation treaties with the Soviet. Advances in electronics have made it easier to monitor communications within and between countries abroad. Computers have made it possible to store and retrieve unbelievable amounts of information.

Too often we think of intelligence only in terms of our relations with the big powers such as the Soviet and the Peoples' Republic of China. Our intelligence people gather information around the world, relatively little of it through espionage. Much of what is learned in other countries has a bearing on U.S. relations with the super-powers, of course.

Across-the-board opposition to intelligence operations is not justified, unless one's purpose is to destroy our country.